

## GOAL

Students will learn to identify food advertisements and marketing techniques, and will understand how media and advertising can influence our food choices and our health.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to name at least three ways they are exposed to advertisements.
2. Students will be able to explain at least one way that ads can influence food choices.
3. Students will analyze ads to see what messages they convey about food.

## MATERIALS

- Analyzing Food Ads worksheets
- Examples of food ads

## REVIEW

Briefly review previous lesson.

Briefly review previous lesson.

## DISCUSSION

Today we are going to learn about food advertising and how ads may influence our food choices and our health.

Let's start by talking about where we see ads. Where do you see/hear advertisements? All over the place!

Show pictures of where we see ads.

- TV
- Newspapers
- Radio
- Billboards
- Magazines
- Movies
- Text messages/e-mails
- Social networking sites, Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram.

These are all different forms of media. What is media? Media are tools used for communicating or expressing information or ideas to people. It's used to persuade (for example, magazine and internet ads are created to persuade you to buy something), to inform (for example, newspapers are created to give you information about a certain topic), and to entertain (such as video games or movies).

Today we will mainly discuss advertising, specifically food advertising.

Before we talk more about advertising, let's do a quick activity. Think about what you did yesterday. I will call out activities and if you did the activity yesterday, follow the exercises I tell you to do. If you did not do the activity, just stand still. Ready? Great job!

- If you watched TV yesterday, do 5 jumping jacks
- If you played video/computer games yesterday, do 5 squats
- If you used the internet yesterday, do 5 toe touches
- If you listened to the radio yesterday, run in place for 5 seconds

Now, sit down if you did just one of the exercises. Sit down if you did just two of the exercises. Sit down if you did just three. And finally sit down, if you did all 4 of the exercises.

- Almost everyone in the room did one of these activities yesterday, and most of us did more than one. Do you think this is typical?

How much time, on average, do you think young people spend using media each day? Remember media includes watching TV, going online, using cell phones, playing video games, listening to music, and reading.

Young people ages 11 to 14 spend an average of 8 hours and 40 minutes a day using media! This is more time than they spend doing anything else except sleeping.

- What do you think about this amount of time? It seems like a lot, right?
- Why do you think most youth spend more time using media than being physically active?
- Instead of sitting in front of a screen or using other media for more than 8 hours each day, what else could young people do with their time?
  - Some ideas might include: walk with friends, do homework, play sports or games with family or friends, sleep, talk with friends or family, go skateboarding, ride a bike, go on errands with a family member, play at the park with siblings, do household chores, or walk the dog.

It is recommended that youth spend no more than 2 hours a day on "screen time" (watching TV, on the computer, phone or tablet). This is to make sure there is plenty of time in the day for being physically active and getting enough sleep. Using media, including "screen time" is fine, but we just want to make sure we have time for other important healthy habits as well.

## ADVERTISEMENTS

What is an advertisement (or ad)? And what is the goal of advertising?

- An advertisement is a specific kind of media with the main purpose of persuading people to buy or support something. Companies spend a lot of money on advertising. The money they spend on advertising is from consumers (us) who spend money buying their products.

Where have you seen advertisements?

Show certain activities related to media use: watching TV, Playing computer/video games, using the internet, listening to the radio, etc. Have students do certain exercises if they did that activity yesterday.

Show pictures of where we see ads.



- Some common places include TV commercials, ads on your phone, billboards, and radio commercials. We'll talk about some other places we see ads also – some may seem sort of sneaky!

Ads are everywhere! See if you can spot the ad in these photos.

- When celebrities wear certain brands, they are often being paid by that company to promote the brand. This is a form of advertising.
- Many buildings, sports arenas and stadiums are named after certain companies or products. Again, these companies paid lots of money for their name to be used, and this is another form of advertising. Similarly, certain games and events are sponsored by companies as a way to advertise their brand. Can you think of an example? (If you've watched a game on TV, there might be a "Hardee's halftime show" or something like that.)
- This next one is an example of product placement. Companies pay to have their products visible in TV shows or movies. It may look like the characters or celebrities are just using or eating something they enjoy, but it is actually advertising.
- Trucks and buses are often covered in advertisements.
- You might not think of it this way, but packaging is another way of advertising. If the company can make the package really appealing, you may be more likely to buy it.

Here's a list of common places where we find advertisements.

- What does this list show us?
  - Advertising is all around us, in many parts of our lives—outdoors, at home, on the Internet, TV and radio.
  - There are many different ways advertisers can reach us.
  - Advertising appears in places we may not immediately think of, such as on food and drink packages, in sport arenas, and through branded online games.

## ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

You have seen lots of commercials and advertisements and there are a lot of different strategies companies use to get you interested in buying their product.

What are some advertising strategies that companies use? Remember that the purpose of advertisements is to persuade you to buy that company's product. Try to think like an advertiser and think of ways that you would try to convince people to make a purchase.

- What characteristics do ads emphasize to sell the product? (price, healthfulness, taste, etc.)
- What techniques do you think companies use to make you want the products they are advertising?

Some common strategies used by advertisers include:

- **Famous Characters** – Companies buy the rights to use famous characters in their advertising to draw your attention and so that you will associate their product with your favorite characters.

Show pictures of celebrities wearing a certain brand, a building named after a company, product placement in a show or movie, a truck or bus with an ad wrap, and a food label with a claim. See if students can spot the ad.

Show a long list of places where you might see advertisements:

TV commercials; Radio commercials; Infomercials; Newspaper ads; Magazine ads; Public service announcements (PSAs); Billboards; Brand names, logos, or characters; Word-of-mouth; Signs on the outside and inside of buses; Internet pop-up ads; Website banners; Branded advergames; Online video ads; User-generated ads; E-mail ads; Spam; Product tie-ins with popular movies and TV programs; Mobile ads (text messages); Previews before movies and DVDs; Promotional activities in schools or at shopping malls; Radio contests; Art contests; Signs in sports stadiums; Signs on the sides of trucks and vans; Food and drink packages; Shopping bags; Direct mail; Telemarketing; Cups, mugs, and other giveaway items

If time allows, discuss other advertising techniques, such as:

**Ideal kids or families** – Have you ever noticed how all of the families in commercials seem perfect? The kids are attractive, have the newest/coolest clothes, haircuts, etc., always seem very happy. The families always get along and have fun together (with the product). These are actors hired by the companies, and intentionally represent the types of people the viewers watching would want to be, or want their family to be.

**Facts and Figures** – Companies tend to use facts and statistics to enhance their appeal and credibility.

**Heart Strings** – Some ads use emotional scenarios that draw you into a story and make you feel good.



- **Brand Characters** – Many products have their own cartoon character that represents the product or company. Cartoon characters make the food look fun to eat. Also, people tend to remember the product from the character.
- **Celebrities** (“Star Power”) – Companies use celebrities to express that their product is the best. Just remember that the celebrity is being paid to say this!
- **Jingles and Slogans** – Advertisers use catchy songs or sayings to grab your attention. They create jingles and slogans that easily get stuck in your head so that it’ll keep their product on your mind.
- **Premiums** – Prizes or toys are used with certain products (e.g.: fast food kids meals, prizes in cereal boxes) as an added incentive for you to buy their product.
- **Product Placement** – This is when a product is used in a show or movie. You may think that the characters or celebrities are just enjoying a product of their choosing, but the company paid money for it to be included – this is advertising.
- **Health claims** – Have you ever noticed a health claim on a food? We talked about this during the label reading lesson. There are claims that food manufacturers have put on food to make you think the food is a healthy choice. This is another form of advertising – a way to encourage you to buy the food.

We are going to take a look at a few of these strategies more in depth to see how effective they are.

## Health Claims

Let’s start by looking at little more into health claims.

Take a look at these two packages. Which do you think is healthier? The Oreos or the chocolate chip cookies? I’m guessing most of you all are thinking the Oreos. Why? Right, because it says reduced fat. Would you be more likely to buy those cookies over the chocolate chip ones? Probably. So, the claims work – encouraging people to buy food products based on a claim on the package.

Now, let’s look at two drinks. We have apple white grape juice and a grape drink. Both of these drinks have health claims on them. Do you see the claims? They are both claiming that they are a great source of vitamin C. Does that mean they are equal in health for our bodies? How do we know? Where do we need to look? Right, we need to look at the nutrition label and the ingredients list.

For example, what do you think this juice should be made of? Yes! Grapes and apples. Let’s take a look at the ingredients list. Is it made from apples and grapes? Yes!

How about this one? Grape drink. What do you think this juice should be made of? Grapes, right? Let’s take a look at the ingredients list...is it made of grapes? No! Look at all of the ingredients used to make this drink...and none of them came from grapes! Just the name of the food can be deceiving! The ingredients list gives us a lot of information about what was used to make the food.

**“Cool Factor”** – Are you cool enough? The company tries to convince you that if you don’t buy their products you’re a nerd. They show uncool people trying a product and suddenly become “cool”.

**Excitement** – Advertisers use excitement to catch your attention. Who could have imagined that food could be so fun? One bite and you’re doing something exciting.

**Scale** – Sometimes advertisers make a product look bigger or smaller than it really is to make it stand out.

**Omission** – When advertisers don’t give the full story about their product.

**Sounds good** – Advertisers add music and other sound effects to add excitement. They use catchy jingles to help keep their products in the viewers mind. They also have the volume higher in commercials compared to the regular program.

**Put Downs** – Companies put down other products to make theirs seem better.

**Weasel Words** – Advertisers use words that mislead consumers. For example, “Part of...”, “Because we care...”, “New, better tasting...”

Show a picture of Reduced Fat Oreos and regular chocolate chip cookies.

Show a picture of apple white grape juice and Kool-Aid Grape drink.

Show picture of the ingredients list for apple white grape juice.

Show the ingredients list of Kool-Aid Grape drink.



Based on just the ingredients lists. Which one is a better choice for our bodies? Right, the apple white grape juice because it is actually made from the real fruit. So even though both drinks say they are good sources of vitamin C, it doesn't mean they are equal in goodness for your body. Remember, food manufacturers are trying to get you to buy their food products, so they will put claims on the front to try to persuade you. Remember, the food label is where to find the facts, not the front of the package!

Now, let's take a look at some of the other advertising strategies to illustrate just how effective they are.

### **Slogans or Jingles**

One technique we mentioned was catchy slogans or jingles. Companies create short songs or catchy sayings to encourage customers to think of their products. We'll play a quick game to see how many jingles or slogans you can complete to identify the food product that it is connected to.

What makes these jingles so effective?

- Short, catchy phrases and simple music that make them easy to remember
- Repetition of the jingle in TV and radio ads

### **Logos**

What is a logo?

- A logo is a symbol that stands for a company or organization. Logos are used to make you quickly recognize and like a product or company.

Raise your hand if you think logos are advertisements.

- Because they are such a common form of advertising, you are exposed to logos every day. Advertisers rely on repeated exposure to these logos to help sell their brand or product to consumers.
- We see logos associated with foods and drinks every day. Let's see how quickly you can recognize these common food companies' logos. Call out the name of the company if you recognize their logo.

Now that seemed pretty easy for you, even though there aren't any words or names up here. That is the kind of quick association that these companies want – they want you to instantly recognize their brand whenever you see these symbols, and to associate it with their products.

### **Brand Characters**

To attract kids, another method used by food companies is to create characters that are associated with their product or brand.

- Do you have a favorite "food character"?

Let's do a similar activity as we did with the logos.... Call out the name of the product if you recognize these brand characters.

Why might companies create "spokes-characters"?

- They give products a friendly face that kids can relate to
- They make the product appear fun and exciting
- What do you like best about these characters?

Play a "Jeopardy" style game with groups of students guessing the slogans/jingles. Let groups choose a category they want, but do not keep score.

Show some common food logos, and have students call out which brands they are associated with.

Show some common food brand characters, and have students try to quickly identify the brand they are associated with.



## THE EFFECT OF ADVERTISING

Clearly these advertising strategies work! You all are very familiar with lots of brands and foods. How many ads do you think you see each year? Youth ages 8-14 see 30,000 ads a year. That's a lot! On average, you may see 16 ads per day for candy, snacks, fast food, cereal, sodas, and soft drinks.

What do you think about the effect of advertising on your life?

- Advertising makes us want the products we see promoted.
- We associate certain products with specific ways of being or feeling, such as being beautiful, happy, carefree, popular, rich, or smart.
- We associate certain actors, characters or music with specific products.
- Advertising affects our emotions by portraying the way we want to feel about ourselves.
- The Internet provides new, exciting, entertaining, and interactive ways to advertise.
- When we use more than one form of media at the same time, we need to remember that our exposure to advertisements significantly increases.

What do you think about all of the food advertising aimed at young people?

- It's nice that advertisers are paying attention to young people, but the products being advertised aren't necessarily healthy for them. Food advertisements promote processed foods and foods that are high in sugar, salt and fat more than they promote vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and other healthy foods.

What types of advertisements do you see most often? Yes! Most of the advertisements we see are for food. Now, think about food and drink ads you've seen recently. What kinds of foods and drinks do you see advertised?

- Foods that are fast and easy to make, such as prepared foods, fast foods, breakfast cereals, sports drinks, candy, soda, chips and other snack foods.
- Are vegetables, fruits or whole-grain foods featured very often in media?
  - Sometimes, but not too often. Remember, fruits, veggies, and whole-grains are foods that are packed with nutrients to help our bodies grow and be strong.

## ADVERTISING AND FOOD CHOICES

Do you think that advertising affects your food choices? Yes, advertisements are very tempting! When we see an ad for a particular food, it may make us crave that food even though we aren't even hungry. It can be hard to choose healthy foods when advertising focuses so much on candy, soda, chips, fast foods and other processed foods.

One way we know that food advertising affects our food choices is by looking at how much food companies spend on promoting food products to youth.

- How much money do you think they spend on food advertisements each year?



- \$1.8 BILLION! That’s a lot of money – look how many zeros are up there!
- Why do you think they spend so much money on advertisements? Right, because it works. We are buying the exact foods they are advertising and lots of them. That wouldn’t be so bad if the advertisements were for fruit, veggies, and whole grains, but often they aren’t.

### CONNECTION BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND HEALTH

Do you think that there is a connection between food advertisements and health? Advertising is everywhere and can have a powerful effect on our attitudes, behaviors, and health.

- Think about the foods that are most often advertised. What do these types of foods have in common? Many of the foods featured in advertisements are high in added sugars, salt and/or fats. And many are convenience foods or what we call “processed foods”, which is something we will talk more about in our next class.

There is definitely a connection between food ads and health.

- They may make you want to have the foods, even if you aren’t hungry or thirsty (mindless eating).
- They can make it really hard to choose vegetables, fruits and whole grains, when we see these other kinds of foods so often.
- We see lots of advertisements while using media that often promote foods that do not have much nutritional value.
- Advertisements make foods very tempting, which can lead us away from eating to satisfy hunger. People are more likely to overeat (or under-eat) if they lose track of whether or not they are hungry.
- Media offer attractive role models who can inspire us to take care of our bodies by eating smart and being active. But media often portray body sizes and shapes that are unrealistic and have little to do with being healthy.

Let’s go back to media in general. Where do we see most ads? On TV, phones, computers, video/computer games....mostly on screens. So besides just the advertisements, how could screen time affect our health?

- Media keep us busy, but not necessarily active. People often choose to watch TV or play on the computer instead of being physically active.
- Many people like to snack while they use media and do not realize how much they are eating. They often choose snack foods that are high in solid fats, added sugars, and calories. These foods may taste good, but they don’t have much nutritional value.

Evidently, there is a huge connection between screen time, foods ads, and health. Try to keep this in mind the next time you are watching TV and think about just how much airtime advertisers are purchasing to sell their products to you.

Ask students about the connection between media and health, and add to their responses as necessary.

### WRAP UP

#### The Effect of Advertising



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What do you think about the effect of advertising on your life?

- Advertising makes us want the products we see promoted.
- We associate certain products with specific ways of being or feeling, such as being beautiful, happy, carefree, popular, rich, or smart.
- We associate certain actors, characters or music with specific products.
- Advertising affects our emotions by portraying the way we want to feel about ourselves.
- The Internet provides new, exciting, entertaining, and interactive ways to advertise.
- When we use more than one form of media at the same time, we need to remember that our exposure to advertisements significantly increases.

How many ads do you think young people see and hear, on average, every year?

- Youth ages 8 to 14 see and hear an average of 30,000 television advertisements a year.
- Most of these advertisements are for food. On average, you may see 16 ads per day for candy, snacks, fast food, cereal, sodas, and soft drinks.
- Try to keep this in mind the next time you are watching TV and think about just how much airtime advertisers are purchasing to sell their products to you.
- Companies spend \$1.8 billion a year on promoting food products to children and youth. *(Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3781010/>)*

## CHALLENGE

Who's up for a challenge? My challenge to you this week is to be ad savvy and notice the number of food advertisements you see this week, and think about the strategies the food companies are using. Consider whether or not they are promoting healthy products.

Be a thoughtful user of media and a critical thinker when you see advertisements, so you can decide for yourself what you think of the ideas that are presented to you and so you can choose what is best for you and your health.

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## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

### 1. How to be Ad Savvy: Questions for Analyzing Food Ads Activity

I am going to give each group a food advertisement to analyze. You are going to work with your group to answer these questions. I will walk around the room if you need any help. There is sometimes more than one correct answer. *(After reviewing the questions, provide each group of students a food ad and the "Analyzing Food Ads" worksheet. Have one student in the group record the answers. As time allows, review some of the groups' answers.)*

#### WHO?

- Who created the ad? This question is asking you to identify the company or product that is being advertised. What is the ad selling?

#### WHAT?

- What is pictured in the ad?
- What is the message? Identify the main idea, statement, or opinion that this ad is trying to get across. Once you know what the message is, you can decide what you think about it and whether you agree with it.

#### HOW?

- How does the ad try to convince you to buy the product? How does the ad grab your attention and what marketing techniques does it use?





- How much is missing? What information is left out? This question is asking you to identify information that is not included in the advertisement, but that is still important. The act of leaving out information is known as “omission.” For example, a food ad might leave out information about some of the ingredients. Companies sometimes leave out certain information because they are trying to emphasize a particular point that sounds good and may want to ignore other details that wouldn’t sound appealing to their audience.
2. Show **“The Power of Advertising” video**: This video goes over some of the advertising strategies we just discussed, and gets us thinking about the influence of advertising and how it might affect our health: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAHVbYsFwP4>.
  3. Show the **“Food Ad Tricks” video**: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUjz\\_eiIX8k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUjz_eiIX8k).
  4. **Fact or Opinion?** Tell students that sellers make a variety of claims in advertisements; some claims are factual and some are statements of opinion. Explain the difference between fact and opinion.
    - a. Factual claims are statements that can be proven true or false. The following statements are examples of factual claims: The bike has three gears; the bike is available in red or blue; the price of the bike is \$90.00.
    - b. Opinions are statements based on a belief or value. For example: The bike is better than bikes made by other companies; the bike is easier to ride; the bike is more fun to ride than other bikes.
    - c. Ask students to read advertising claims and tell whether each asserts a factual claim or an opinion. Some ideas are:
      - i. Facts: This soft drink has zero calories; everything is 20% off this weekend; our computer has a one-year warranty.
      - ii. Opinions: No one makes better hamburgers; the game that is edge-of-your-seat fun; the best movie you’ll see all year.
  5. **Create a Fruit or Vegetable Ad!** Have students create an advertisement for a favorite (or an unusual) fruit or vegetable, using some of the techniques discussed during class.
    - a. Assign a specific F/V to each table group, and have them create a magazine ad for it. Or allow groups to select a F/V of their choosing.
    - b. Or, choose one fruit or vegetable for the entire class to create an ad campaign around. Have each table work on a different element of the campaign. Assign one task to each group, such as:
      - i. Create a jingle/slogan for the fruit or vegetable
      - ii. Create a “brand character”
      - iii. Write a PA announcement(s) to promote it
      - iv. Create a poster or bulletin board to be displayed somewhere in the school
      - v. Write tweets or Facebook posts
      - vi. Write a recipe using the F or V
    - c. Or, it could be a competition between groups or between classes to create the best jingle/brand character/PA announcement/bulletin board; or to create the best overall ad campaign (maybe between classes). Have students and/or teachers vote on the best one, or see which campaign can encourage the most students to try the F/V.

## STUDENT HANDOUTS

- “Analyzing Food Ads” worksheet



## PARENT HANDOUTS

- Today in Nutrition Class... Food Ads



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